Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's

Treatise on Prayer
(*Ṣalâh*)

رسالة الإمام أحمد في الصلاة

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Introduction

Verily, all praise is due to Allah, we praise Him and we seek His aid and we ask His forgiveness, we seek shelter from the evil of ourselves and from the wickedness of our deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides, there is none that can misguide him and whomsoever Allah sends astray, there is none who can guide him. And I testify that none is worthy of worship except Allah Alone, without partners and I testify that Muhammad is His slave and His Messenger.

Certainly, Salah (regular prayer) is the first and most important matter after testimony, the second pillar and it is the difference between faith and disbelief The Messenger of Allah said: «Between a person and disbelief is discarding Salah.»[1]

Salah is our connection to our Lord and our success in the Hereafter depends upon our performance of it in this world. If we accept this, we must then strive to perform our Salah in the way which is accepted by Allah, i.e. as the Prophet himself used to perform them. He said: «Pray as you have seen me performing Salah.»[2]

Imam Ahmad, doubtless and mindful of the Words of Allah:

> **(So woe to the worshippers who are careless in the performance of their prayers.)** *(Qur'an 107: 4-5)*

has dwelt at great length in this treatise on the importance of performing one's Saláh carefully and correctly, in accordance with the confirmed practices of the Prophet as narrated in the authentic hadiths.

The treatise was written for the people of a community with whom Imam Ahmad had prayed a number of times. During his Salah, he noticed that most of them were not performing Salah properly; indeed, the errors were so serious in some cases, as to nullify their Salah. The resulting work (treatise) was, and remains, an excellent advice to all those who fear Allah and hate to incur His displeasure and seek only His pleasure. May Allah guide us all to His Truth and keep us firm upon the Straight Path: Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error. Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which you laid on those before us. Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Blot out our sins and forgive us. Have mercy on us. You are our protector. Help us against the disbelieving people.) (Qur'an 2: 286)

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[1] Muslim, Ahmad, Abu Dawood, et al.
[2] Bukhari.

Imam Ahmad

Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Hanbal (may Allah be merciful to him) was born in Baghdad in 780 C.E. and travelled extensively in Iraq, Syria, Hijaz (Western Arabia) and Yemen collecting Hadiths. After returning home, he studied fiqh (Islamic Law) under Imam Shafee`i!

During the reign of the `Abbassid Caliphs', al-Ma'moon, al-Mu'tasim and al-Wathiq (813-847 C.E.) the dogma of the Mu`tazilite[3] was the official doctrine of the state and inquisition courts were set up to enforce it. Ibn Hanbal openly denounced the pagan Greek philosophical concepts on which Mu`tazilite thought was based and as a result, he was subsequently subjected to imprisonment and corporal punishment.

Under the Caliph, al-Mutawakkil (847-861 C.E.), his tribulations ceased and the fame of Ibn Hanbal's learning, piety and unswerving faithfulness to tradition gathered a host of students and admirers around him. He died in Baghdad in 855 C.E. and 'The Hanbali school of Islamic Law' was named after him. His major work, al-Musnad contains approximately 40,000 hadiths. He was the foremost among the Imams in collecting the Sunnah[4] and adhering to it, so much so that he even disliked that a book consisting of deductions and opinions be written. Because of this he once said: "Do not follow my opinion; neither follow the opinion of Malik or ash-Shafee`i, nor Awza`i, nor ath-Thawri, but take from where they took (i.e. the authentic hadiths)."

O' people! I have been performing Salah (praying) with you and I have observed that some of the worshippers in your mosques precede the Imam in bowing, prostrating, straightening up and going down. And there is no Salah for those who compete with the Imam (i.e. their salah are not accepted). The proof of this is in the hadith of the Prophet and the narrations of his Companions, such as the hadith in which he said: «Does not the one who raises his head before the Imam fear that Allah will change his head into that of a donkey?»[5]

In another narration he said*:* «... into the shape of (that of) a dog?»[6] This is because he performs salah badly, so there is no Salah for him. If there were, he might hope for a reward and not fear a punishment, which is that Allah will turn his head into that of a donkey or a dog.

It is also narrated that he said: «The Imam should bow before you, prostrate before you and straighten up before you.»[7]

It is also reported that al-Barra' ibn `Azib said: «We used to perform Salah behind the Prophet and when he went down from a standing position to prostrate, not one of us would bend his back until the Messenger of Allah had placed his forehead on the ground. Then they would follow him.»[8]

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[3] Mu`tazilite: A group who introduced speculative dogma into Islamic beliefs, relying on what they were pleased to term 'logic', even though it contradict the Qur'an and authentic hadiths.
[4] Sunnah: Way or practices of the last Prophet (pbuh)
[5] Bukhari and Muslim.
[6] Ibn Hibban
[7] Muslim
[8] Bukhari and Muslim.

And it is recorded from the Prophet's Companions that they said: «Allah's Messenger used to stand up straight while we were still prostrating.»

From lbn Mas'ood it is narrated that he looked towards one who had preceded the Imam and said to him: «You have neither performed Salah alone nor followed your Imam (i.e performed salah in congregation). Whoever does not performs salah alone, nor with the Imam has not performed salah at all.»

It is narrated from lbn 'Umar that he looked towards a man who anticipated the Imam and said to him: "You have neither performed Salah alone, nor with the Imam. Then he struck him and ordered him to repeat his salah" Obviously if, in 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar's opinion, his Salah was accepted, he would not have ordered him to repeat it.

Hittan ibn 'Abdullah ar-Raqashi said, Abu Moosa al-Ash'ari led us in Salah, and while he was sitting in Salah, a man from amongst the people said: "Has Salah been linked to piety and good deeds and zakah?" When Abu Moosa finished s' Salah, he left the mosque, saying, "Which of you said these words?" The people were silent. He then asked them again and they remained silent. So he said, "Perhaps it was you, O' Hittan?" Hittan replied, "By Allah it was not I who said it, but I feared that you would blame me for it." Then a man from amongst them said, "I said it, but I intended only good by it." Abu Moosa al-Ash'ari said, "Do you not know what to say during your Sarah? Verily, Allah's Messenger addressed us and explained to us our Sunnah (i.e. the Salah) and what we should say in it." He said: «When you perform Salah, you should form your rows, then one of you must lead the rest in Salah, and when he says, "Allahu Akbar" , then make takbeer (after him) and when he recites, be silent, and when he says:

(Not those who incur [Your] anger nor those who are astray*)* *(Qur'an 1: 7)*

Say: "Ameen!" and Allah will answer you. Then, when the Imam makes takbeer, and bows, make takbeer (after him) and bow (likewise), for verily, the Imam should bow before you and straighten up before you. Allah's Messenger said, "This followed by that (i.e. the action of the Imam followed by the action of the worshippers). And when the Imam raises his head and says, *'Sami' Allahu liman Hamidah*,' (Allah hears the one who praises Him), then raise your heads and say, *Allahumma Rubbana wa Lak al-hamd'* (Our Lord! To You is due all praise), for Allah hears you. Then, when the Imam says, '*Allahu Akbar'* and prostrates then make *takbeer* and prostrate (after him). And when he raises his head and makes *takbeer*, raise your heads and make *takbeer* (after him). "»

He said: «This followed by that. And when he sits, the first thing that each one of you should say is, "*at-Tahiyyatu was-Salawatu wat Tayyibatu*..." to the end of the tashahud.»

The Prophet said: «When he (the Imam) makes takbeer, then you make takbeer. This means, Wait until the Imam has completed the takbeer and his voice is no longer heard, then say, "*Allahu Akbar* (Allah is All-Great)!" after him. Many people are mistaken in their understanding of these hadiths and are ignorant of their true meaning, and they do not perform the Salah properly and are careless about it. The

moment the Imam says, "*Allahu Akbar*" they say it also; this is a mistake for they should not make the *takbeer* until after the Imam has completed his *takbeer*.»
This is why the Prophet said: «When the Imam makes takbeer, then you make takbeer — and the Imam cannot be considered to have made takbeer until he completes it, for if he were to say, "Allahu..." and then become silent, he could not be said to have made takbeer until he completed it, saying, "Allahu Akbar!" after which the people may follow him and make takbeer also. Making takbeer with the Imam is wrong and abandoning the instruction of the Prophet because if one were to say, "When so-and-so performs Salah, speak to him," it would mean, wait until he has performed ,Salah, then speak to him, not speak to him while he is performing Salah.»

Likewise, when Allah's Messenger said: «When the Imam makes *takbeer*, then you make *takbeer*.»

If the Imam has no knowledge of fiqh, he might lengthen the *takbeer* due to his ignorance, causing those who perform Salah with him to cut short their *takbeer*, thus making it before the Imam completes his *takbeer*, and whoever says: "*Allahu Akbar*!" before the Imam, his Salah is not accepted.

The saying of the Prophet «"When the Imam makes *takbeer* and bows, then you make *takbeer* and bow," — means that they should wait and remain standing until he has said, "*Allahu Akbar*!" and his voice is no longer heard before doing likewise.»

The saying of the Prophet: «And when he raises his head and says, "*Sami' Allahu liman Hamidah*," then raise your heads and say, "*Allahumma Rabbana wa Lak al-Hamd*," means that they should wait and remain bowing until after the Imam has raised his head and said, "*Sami' Allahu liman Hamidah*."»

His saying: «When he (the Imam) says *takbeer* and prostrates..., means that they should remain standing until he says, "*Allahu Akbar*" and prostrates, placing his forehead on the ground, then they should follow him.» This is confirmed by a narration from Barra’ ibn 'Azib, and all of what we have said is confirmed by the words of the Prophet: «The Imam should bow before you and straighten up before you.»

The saying of the Prophet: «When the Imam lifts his head and makes *takbeer*, then raise your heads and make *takbeer*, means, they should remain in *sujood* (prostration) until after the Imam raises his head and has said, "*Allahu Akbar*!" and his voice is no longer heard — then they should follow him and raise their heads.»

His saying: «This followed by that — refers to every raising and lowering, and this is the complete Salah. Think about this! Observe and perfect it and know that most of the people's Salah are not accepted because they anticipate the Imam in bowing and prostrating and in straightening up and going down.»

It has been narrated in a hadith: «There will come a time when people will perform Salah, but they will not perform salah (i.e. they will perform Salah, but their Salah will not be as the Prophet instructed and his Companions practised. Thus it will not be accepted).» "I fear that that time is, our time. If you were to perform Salah in a hundred mosques, you would not find a single one where the Salah is performed in

accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet and his Companions. So fear Allah, look at your Salah and that of the one performing Salah beside you. You should be aware that if a man performs Salah correctly, completing his Salah, and sees another who performs Salah (prays) badly, losing (the reward of) it, preceding the Imam in it, and he remains silent and does not inform him of that, nor forbid him from doing it, nor advise him (how to perform Salah correctly), then is considered to be equally culpable and shares in his sin and his shame. That is to say, the one who performs Salah well is a partner in the incorrect performance of the Salah of him who perform Said h badly, if he does not prevent him by advising him. Bilal ibn Sa`d said, 'The sin which is hidden harms no one except the perpetrator, but if it is apparent and no one changes it, then it is a sin which will harm the whole community.' "[9]

— This is because they have shirked in their responsibility and neglected their obligation, which is to change and show disapproval for the one who sins in public. It is narrated that the Prophet said: «Woe to the scholar from the ignorant man when he does not teach him.»[10] It is evident that, were teaching of the ignorant man by the scholar not obligatory, rather than a voluntary service, he would not be told: "Woe to you! because of his silence and failure to teach him."

So fear Allah (it), in all your affairs, especially your Salah. And fear Allah in your teaching of the ignorant, because it is an obligation and a compulsory requirement and whoever fails to do it is a sinful wrongdoer. So advise the people in your mosques to perform Salah perfectly and not to make their *takbeer* before that of the Imam, nor to bow before him, nor to straighten up or go down before him. You should know that this is the perfect Salah, and this is a compulsory requirement. This is how it is narrated from the Prophet and his Companions.

It is a most amazing thing to see a man in his house, who, when he hears the call to Salah, stands up in fear (of his Lord) and prepares himself, then leaves his house for the Salah, wanting nothing other than to perform ,Salah. He might be leaving his house on a dark, rainy night, squelching through mud and splashing in water and soaking his clothes. If it is in summer, he risks (being stung by) scorpions or other venomous pests in the dark. In addition, he might be ill or weak, but still he does not abandon the mosque. And he bears all these things because of his longing for .Salah and his sincere love for it. Only ,Salah could cause him to leave his house in such circumstances. But when the Imam begins the Salah, deceives him, and he competes with the Imam (by anticipating him) in bowing, prostrating, straightening up and going down. This is the deception of Satan, who desires to invalidate his Salah. Then he leaves the mosque, and there is no Salah (accredited) to him.

Another strange thing is that all of the worshippers behind the Imam agree that it is not permissible for anyone to leave the Salah until the Imam does so, all of them wait until the Imam's tasleem. Inspite of this, however, all of them — except as Allah wills — anticipate the Imam in bowing, prostrating, straightening up and going down, due to the deception of Satan, causing them to perform Salah imperfectly, negligently. This is their lot in Islam and it has been narrated in the hadith: «There is no share in Islam for the one who abandons Salah.»[11]

[9] Ibn Hazm
[10] Abu Ya'la
[11] According to at-Tabarani, this is in fact a saying of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab

Therefore, every person who performs Salah imperfectly or negligently is incomplete and careless in his Islam; and his portion in Islam is in accordance with his portion in Salah; and his love of Islam is equivalent to his love of Salah.

So know yourself, O' slave of Allah and know that your portion in Islam and the measure of your Islam are in due proportion to your portion in Salah and the measure of it. So take care that you do not meet Allah, and your Islam is worthless, for the measure of one's Islam is found in the heart.

The Prophet said: «Salah is a pillar of Islam.»[12] Do you not know that a tent is supported by its poles? If the pole falls, the tent will also fall — the tent's ropes and the pegs will not help. But if the pole is in place, the ropes and the pegs will be of use. Likewise, the Salah is in Islam. So observe — may Allah have mercy on you — think and perfect your Salah fear Allah in it; cooperate with each other concerning it and advise each other in it by teaching one another how to perform it correctly and reminding each other concerning your mistakes and forgetfulness in it, because Allah has ordered you to cooperate with each other in piety and fear of Him, and salah is the best form of piety.

The Prophet said: «The first thing that will be lost from your religion is trust and the last thing to be lost will be the Salah. You will see people from amongst you praying, but they will receive no reward for it."[13]

It is also narrated that the Prophet said: «The first of his deeds about which the slave will be asked on the Day of Resurrection is his Salah — if this is accepted, the rest of his deeds will also be accepted. If his Salah is rejected, all his deeds will be rejected.»[14]

So Salah is the last thing (to be lost) in the religion and the first matter about which we will be asked. And if Salah is the last thing to be lost in Islam, then when Salah is lost, all will be lost. So hold fast to your .Salah — may Allah have mercy on you. Let the one who is careless in Salah, the one who performs Salah imperfectly, the one who precedes the Imam (in bowing, prostrating etc.) be aware that there is no .Salah for him and that if his Salah is gone, so is his religion. So honour your Salah — may Allah have mercy on you — and hold fast to it, and fear Allah, especially in Salah, and in all your affairs. You should know that Allah has extolled the virtue and importance of Salah in the Qur'an. He has honoured it and exalted its people (i.e. the Muslims). And He has singled it out for special mention in the Qur'an, from amongst the various acts of worship, referring to it in innumerable places and he has especially encouraged us to perform it, by describing for us the pious deeds whose reward is the Garden of Firdaws — the first of which mentioned being Salah and the last of which also being Salah. Allah says:

> **(The believers will succeed and prosper — those who are humble in their prayers.)** *(Qur'an 23: 1-2)*

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[12] Bayhaqi, ad-Daylami, Ahmad and others.
[13] Bayhaqi
[14] Ahmad, Abu Dawood, lbn Majah and others.

In describing the Believers, Allah begins with their Salah, praising them by it. Then He mentions their pure deeds, their charitable deeds, which are pleasing to Him, ending with His words:

> **(Those who faithfully observe their trusts and covenants and who strictly guard their prayers, these will be the heirs who will inherit the Garden of Firdaws. They will dwell therein [forever].)** *(Qur'an 23: 8-11)*

Allah has promised these who perform such noble, charitable deeds which are pleasing to Him, eternal life in al-Firdaws, mentioning Salah twice. Then Allah censures all mankind, disparaging them and charging them with wickedness, impatience and fretfulness and miserliness — except those who performed Salah; Allah has excepted them. He says:

> **(Verily, mankind was created very impatient — fretful when evil touches him; and niggardly when good reaches him — Not so those devoted to prayer those who remain steadfast to their prayer, and those in whose wealth is a recognized right for the [needy one] who asks and him who is prevented [from asking].)** *(Qur'an 70: 19-25)*

Then Allah describes them by their pure, noble deeds, which are pleasing (to Him), up to His words:

> **(And those who stand firm in their testimonies.)** *(Qur'an 70: 33)*

Then He, closes His description and praise of them with mention of their guarding the sanctity of their Salah, saying:

> **(And those who guard [the sacredness of their worship], such will be the honoured ones in the Gardens.)** *(Qur'an 70: 34-35)*

Allah has promised the doers of such noble deeds a place in Paradise, opening His description of them by mentioning Salah and then closing it by mentioning ,Salah again. Then Allah, counsels His Prophet with obedience in all matters, singling out Salah for special mention from amongst the many kinds of obedience, for assuredly Salah is a kind of obedience as Allah says:

> **(Recite what is revealed to you from the Book [the Qur'an] and establish regular prayer...)** *(Qur'an 29: 45)*

Recitation of the Book embraces all manner of obedience and avoidance of all disobedience and Allah has singled out Salah for special mention; He says:

> **(... And establish regular prayer for verily, prayer restrains [the worshipper] from shameful and unjust deeds...)** *(Qur'an 29: 45)*

See how Allah has enjoined upon him [the Prophet] steadfastness in prayer:

> **(Enjoin prayer on your people and be constant therein. We ask you not to provide sustenance, We provide it for you...)** *(Qur'an 20: 132)*

Allah orders the Prophet to command his people to pray and to be constant in it. And He orders all believers to turn to Him with patience and forbearance and He links Salah with patience, saying:

> **(O' you who believe! Seek help in patience and prayer. Truly! Allah is with the patient [i.e. in His Knowledge, His Hearing and His Seeing].)** *(Qur'an 2: 153)*

Likewise, He commanded Banu Isra'eel to seek His help with patience and Salah above all other forms of obedience, saying:

> **(And seek help [from Allah] with patient perseverance and prayer; it is indeed hard except for those who are humble.)** *(Qur'an 2: 45)*

Allah gives an example of steadfastness and patience in the wisdom and guidance which He bestowed upon His *Khaleel*,[15] lbraheem and also upon Loot[16], Ishaq[17] and Ya'qoob[18] (may Allah's peace be upon them). He said:

> **(... O' fire! Be you coolness and safety for Ibraheem.)** *(Qur'an 21: 69)*

Upto His words:

> **(And We saved him and Loot...)** *(Qur'an 21: 71)*

His words:

> **(And We granted him lshaq and, as an additional bounty, Ya'qoob [his grandson]...)** *(Qur'an 21: 72)*

And His words:

> **(... And We sent them inspiration to do good deeds and to establish regular prayer...)** *(Qur'an 21: 73)*

Allah mentions all types of good deeds and singles out Salah for special mention and He enjoins us to perform it regularly. This is like His Words concerning lsma`eel[19] :

> **(He used to order his people to pray and give zakah and he was most pleasing to his Lord.)** *(Qur'an 19: 55)*

See how He mentions Salah first? Also, concerning Prophet Moosa[20] to whom He, the Exalted, Almighty spoke:

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[15] *Khaleel:* In Arabic language this word means a person most-loved or a close friend, a title for Prophet Ibraheem (Abraham
[16] Loot: Lot.
[17] Ishaq: Isaac.
[18] Ya`qoob: Jacob.
[19] Isma`eel: Ishmael.
[20] Moosa: Moses.

> **(Has the story of Moses reached you?)** *(Qur'an 20: 9)*

to His words:

> **(Verily, I am Allah, none has the right to be worshipped but I, so worship Me [Alone] and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise.)** *(Qur'an 20: 14)*

The most beautiful manner of obedience to Allah and avoidance of disobedience is contained in the Words of Allah to Moosa (So worship me) for Allah has specially mentioned Salah (from amongst the many forms of worship) and ordered it specifically. He says:

> **(As for those who hold fast to the Book and establish regular prayer, never shall We suffer the reward of the righteous to perish.)** *(Qur'an 7: 170)*

Holding fast to the Book necessitates complete obedience and avoidance of any kind of disobedience; however, Allah has specially mentioned Salah, saying: (And establish regular Salah) — and for those who lose the salah, Allah has ordered that they be punished because of their disobedience, saying:

> **(But after them there followed a people who delayed their prayers and followed after lusts, soon then, will they face destruction.)** *(Qur'an 19: 59)*

Following after lusts or vain desires involves committing all manner of disobedience, so Allah has attributed to them all manner of disobedience because of their carelessness in their Salah. All of the above is what Allah has told us about the greatness of Salah, putting it before all good deeds and singling it out innumerable times for special mention and enjoining it upon us. Its importance cannot be over-emphasized.

Allah has ordained Salah, ordering His Prophet to perform it (and to order the people to do likewise) from the beginning of his prophethood, before all other acts. And the Prophet enjoined it upon his people as his last act before he died, saying: «(Remember) Allah, Allah in Salah and (in your treatment of) that which your right hand possesses (i.e. the slaves).»[21]

The Prophet also said that, «It is the last advice given by every Prophet to his people, and the last obligation he places upon them before he dies.»

It is also narrated that He said: «Salah (prayer), Salah, Salah.»[22]

So, Salah is the first act of worship made obligatory upon them (the Muslims) and the last advice given by the Prophet to them. It is also the last thing to depart from Islam

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[21] Nasa'i and Ahmad.
[22] Ibn Jareer at-Tabari.

and it is the first action about which the slave will be asked on the Day of Resurrection. It is a pillar of Islam — once it is gone, there is no religion, no Islam. So remember Allah in all your affairs in general, and in your Salah in particular. Hold fast to it, and take care not to lose (the reward of) it nor to be careless in its performance or to anticipate the Imam in it and beware of Satan's deception and his causing you to lose the reward of it, for it is the last thing in your religion; and whoever loses the last of his religion has lost all of it, so hold fast to the last thing in your religion. And direct the Imam — O' slave of Allah!, to take care in his Salah, to take pains in it whenever he bows or prostrates, for I prayed with you one day and I was unable to make tasbeeh (i.e. to say, *Subhana Rabbi al-Adheem* or *Subhana Rabbi al-À`la*) three times in *rukoo*` or *sujood*, and this was due to the haste of the Imam — he neither permitted himself, nor the worshippers to take their time, instead he rushed (through the Salah). So inform him that the Imam — if he prays well — will receive the reward of his Salah and the equivalent to the reward of those performing Salah behind him. But if he performs Salah badly, he will bear that sin and the sin of those who perform Salah behind him.

Al-Hasan al-Basri said: "The most perfect *tasbeeh* is repeated seven times, the midmost *tasbeeh* is repeated five times and the least *tasbeeh* is repeated three times."[23]

So the least number of times which the Imam should repeat *Subhana Rabbi al-Adheem* in *rukoo`* is three and the least number of times he should say, *Subhana Rabbi al-A'la* in *sujood* is also three. When he repeats the *tasbeeh* in *rukoo* and *sujood* three times, he should not rush through it hastily — he should say it properly, enunciating carefully and clearly, for if he says it hastily, those behind him have no time to say it, and they will likewise pronounce it hastily, and may anticipate him and then their Salah will be spoiled and he will bear a sin equivalent to all their sins. However, if he does not pronounce it hastily and completes his Salah and his *tasbeeh* perfectly, then those behind him will do likewise and he will have performed that which is obligatory for him and there will be no sin or burden upon him.

And order him, when he raises his head from bowing and says*: 'Sami' Allahu liman Hamidah'*, to remain standing until he has said, '*Rabbana wa Lak al-hamd,*' without haste in his speech; should he wish to say more than this, then let him say, '*Rabbana wa Lak al-hamd, mil' as-samawati wa mil' al-ardh wa mil 'a ma shi'ta min shay'in bad, la mani`a lima atayt, wa la mutiya lima man 'at, wa la yanfa `u dhal-jaddi minkal-jadd'* (i.e. Our Lord! All praise is due to You, filling the heavens and the earth and filling whatever else You wish, none can withhold what You grant, and none can grant what You withhold, nor can the possessions of an owner benefit him in front of You).[24] This is almost never seen nowadays among the people.

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[23] This is confirmed by a hadith on the authority of seven Companions, reported by Ahmad, Abu Dawood, Ibn Majah and others, which states that He (ppuh) used to say:

"Subhan Rabbi al-A'la three times, but sometimes he would repeat it more often than that. And it is a refutation for those who say that once or twice is sufficient."

(See *The Prophet's Prayer Described* by Shaykh Muhammad Nasir ad-Deen al- Albani.)

[24] Muslim and Nasa'i.

It is narrated from Anas that he said: «Allah's Messenger used to stand, after raising his head from *rukoo* for so long that it was said, "He has forgotten".»[25]

This is never seen nowadays among the people, though it is incumbent upon the Imam not to be in haste after raising his head from *rukoo*`, nor should he say, '*Rubbana wa Lak al-hamd'* too quickly — he should say it slowly and carefully, without rushing, so that the people may say it in time. Then when he prostrates and then raises his head from *sujood*, he should rest momentarily, sitting straight and he should say, *' Rabb-ighfir lee'* , without haste, so that the people may do likewise before he prostrates again. He should not move hastily, prostrating a second time immediately after raising his head, causing the people to anticipate him and resulting in the loss of their ,Salah. Should this happen the Imam will share in their sin and their punishment.

It is narrated that the Prophet said: «Every worshipper is a guardian and is responsible for that which he guards.»[26]

It has also been said that the Imam is a guardian for the worshippers whom he leads in Salah, and there is nothing more important for the Imam than to advise those who perform Salah behind him and forbid them from anticipating him in *rukoo* and *sujood* or from doing so along with him. Instead he should order them to ensure that their bowing, prostrating, straightening up and going down be after his, and he should improve their manner and teach them well — then he may claim to be a guardian over them, for tomorrow (i.e. the Day of Resurrection) he will be asked about them.

It is of paramount importance for the Imam to perform Salah well and completely, to concentrate upon it, for his reward will be good, like that of those who follow him, if he performs Salah well; but he will share in their sin if he performs Salah badly (causing them to do so). It is a right and obligation of the Muslims to send forth as Imam the best, the most pious, the most knowledgeable in religious matters that they may observe him. It has been mentioned in a hadith: «When a man leads his people in Salah while better men perform Salah behind him, they remain in a state of ignorance.»[27]

It is also narrated in a hadith: «Place the matter of your religion in the hands of your fuqaha (scholars of Islamic law), your Imams and your Qurra' — scholars of Qur'anic knowledge and recitation.»[28]

This means the *fuqaha'*, the reciters, the virtuous men of those who know their Lord and fear Him, who take care in their Salah and those of the worshippers behind them, and are fearful of incurring sins of their own or of the worshippers behind them if they perform Salah (pray) badly. And the reciters (*Qari*) are those who have memorized

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[25] Bukhari and Muslim.

[26] Also narrated by Tabari and al-Khateeb al-Baghdadi from Ibn 'Umar.

[27] At-Tabarani. This has been narrated by al-`Uqayli in his book *adh-Dhu 'afa'*
— *The Weak Hadith* from Ibn 'Umar. Its *sanad* (chain of narrators) contains one Haytham ibn `Aqab al-Azadi, who is unknown, although Ibn Hibban regarded him as reliable.

[28] Ad-Daraqutni. According to Shaykh Ibn Taymiyah in his book *al-Fatawa — The Legal Verdicts* there is some question about its *sanad,* which contains one Salam ibn Sulayman, and according to al-`Uqayli, some of his hadiths are *munkar* (disparaged by scholars of hadith, due to some objectionable content in the text of the hadith, or because of the corruption of one or more of its narrators).

the Qur'an and act upon it, not those who simply memorize it. It has been mentioned in a hadith: «Verily, the most correct people by this Qur'an are those who act upon it, even if they do not recite it.»

He who would lead the people in Salah should be the most knowledgeable from amongst them, concerning Allah, the most God-fearing, this is an obligation and is incumbent upon them (i.e. to appoint as their Imam such a pious person). If they do so, their Salah is a purification for them, while if they abandon this obligation, they remain in a state of ignorance, rejection and imperfection in their religion, far from Allah and from His Pleasure and from His Paradise. Allah showers His Mercy upon a people who take pains in their Salah and in their religion, so they should put forward the best from amongst them, following by this means, the Sunnah of their Prophet, seeking in this way nearness to their Allah.

So order your Imam — O' slave of Allah — not to say *takbeer* as soon as he stands in Salah, until he has turned to right and left — and should he observe that the *saff* (the line of worshippers) is not straight, that their shoulders are not in line, he must order them to straighten their rows, and to stand shoulder-to-shoulder; and should he observe that between every worshipper there is a space, he must order them to close ranks until they stand shoulder-to-shoulder. You should know that crookedness in the rows and not ensuring that the shoulders of the worshippers are in line means that the Salah is imperfect and incomplete, and that likewise, a space between each of the worshippers means the Salah is imperfect and incomplete. So beware of this, for it has been narrated from the Prophet that he said: «Form the lines standing closely together, shoulder-to-shoulder, and close the spaces — do not leave between you (even) a space the size of a lamb — for the devils will enter it.»[29]

It is also narrated that whenever the Prophet led the Salah, he would not make the *takbeer* until he had turned to the right and to the left, and he would order them to straighten up their shoulders and he would say: «Do not stand in disarray, for (if you do), your hearts will be in disarray.»[30]

It is also narrated that he turned one day and saw a man whose chest was not in line and he said to him: «It is incumbent upon you to perform Salah shoulder-to-shoulder for if you do not do so, verily, Allah will place disarray in your hearts.»[31]

Therefore straightening the rows and closing up ranks is a necessary part of the Salah, while neglecting it is a deficiency in Salah. It is narrated from 'Umar that, «He used to act as the Imam and that he would not say the *takbeer* until a man came to him whom he had appointed to ensure that the lines were in order, and he would tell him, "They have straightened their rows", then he would make *takbeer*.»[32]

It is also narrated from 'Umar ibn 'Abdul `Azeez something similar to this. And it is narrated that Bilal used to straighten the rows and that he used to rap their shins with a stick until they stood in line. Some scholars have said that this must have occurred during the Salah led by the Prophet at the time of the *iqamah*, before he began Salah",

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[29] Ahmad, Bukhari, Abu Dawood, Nasa'i and lbn Khuzaymah.
[30] Abu Dawood.
[31] Bukhari, Muslim and Abu Dawood.
[32] Tabari: *Tareekh.*

because the hadith tells us that: «... he never made the call to Salah after the Prophet (had died) except on one occasion, when he returned from ash-Sham[33].»[34]

On this occasion Abu Bakr as-Sideeq and other Companions of the Messenger requested him to do so and he acceded to their request. And when they heard the voice of calling them to Salah in Madeenah, after not hearing him do so since the time of the Prophet their hearts were filled with a sense of renewal for the religion of the Prophet and his call to Salah filled them with desire for it, so that some of them said: "The Prophet has come to us in a vision." And when Bilal aroused in them, by his call, a sense of longing for the Prophet they became upset and began to weep for him so that the freed slave-women came out of their houses, longing for the Prophet on hearing Bilal's Adhan (call to Salah) and remembering him. And when Bilâl said: "*Ash-Hadu anna Muhammadan-Rasoolullah* (I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah)" he stopped the Adhan, being unable to continue. Some said, "It is because his mind has become blurred due to his love for the Prophet and his missing him so much." May Allah shower His Mercy upon Bilal and all of the Muhajiroon and the Ansar,[35] and may He make us amongst those who follow them with Ihsan.[36] So fear Allah O' you community of Muslims! And perfect your Salah and implement the Sunnah of your Prophet and his Companions in them. This is a mandatory obligation upon you.

Allah has promised those who follow them His Pleasure and an eternal dwelling in Paradise. He says:

> **(The vanguard [of Islam] — the first of those who forsook [their homes] and those who gave them aid and [also] those who follow them with ihsan — Well pleased is Allah with them, as they are with Him: For them has He prepared Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever, that is the supreme felicity.)** *(Qur'an 9: 100)*

And to follow the Muhajiroon and the Ansar is an obligation upon the people until the Day of Resurrection.

It is narrated from the Prophet: «... that he used to pause silently twice during the Salah — once after the opening supplication and once after completing his recitation (i.e. before going into *rukoo*)[37].»[38]

— He used to pause before *rukoo* in order to recover his breath after recitation, but most of the Imams act otherwise. So order him (the Imam) O' slave of Allah, to remain silent until his breath returns to him, before making *rukoo* and he should avoid joining his recitation to the *takbeer* of *rukoo'* without a pause in between. In general, most of the people neglect to do this except those whom Allah wills — and they do it

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[33] Ash-Sham: Present-day Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine.
[34] Tabari: *Tareekh.*
[35] *Muhajiroon:* The Muslims of Makkah who migrated after the Prophet to Madeenah. *Ansar:* The Muslims of Madeenah who welcomed the immigrants from Makkah.
[36] *Ihsan* is defined by the Prophet as, 'to worship Allah as if you see
Him, for though you may not see Him, verily He sees you.' (Narrated by Muslim)
[37] It should be noted here that the practice of many Imams of pausing after reciting *Soorah al-Fatihah* is one for which there is no authentic proof.
[38] Abu Dawood and Tirmidhi.

without being aware of their mistake. And some of the younger, more vigorous members of the congregation often go down from a standing position into *sujood* and place their hands on the ground before their knees[39] and when they stand up from *sujood*, or the *tashahud*, they lift their knees from the ground before their hands, and this is incorrect.[40] It contradicts the opinion of the scholars of *Fiqh*; it is incumbent upon him to put his knees on the ground then his hands when he goes down into *sujood* and when he rises, he should lift his hands before his knees — this is what has come to us from the Prophet.[41] So order (the Imam) to do this and forbid whomsoever you see doing otherwise and order him, when he rises, to rise on the tips of his toes and not to place one foot in front of the other, because this is something *makrooh* (i.e. detested). It is reported from 'Abdullah ibn `Abbas and others that placing one foot in front of the other when one rises nullifies the Salah. It is recommended for the worshipper to fix his gaze on the point where he places his forehead when he prostrates, and not to raise his eyes towards the heavens, nor shift his gaze from side to side beware of this, because it is *makrooh*;[42] it has even been said that it nullifies the Salah. And when he prostrates, he should place his fingers level with his ears and he should keep his fingers together, pointing towards the Qiblah.[43] He should also keep his elbows and his forearms away from his sides and not press them against his body. It is narrated in a hadith from the Prophet that: «... when he used to prostrate, if a lamb had passed under his arms it could have got through.»[44]

This was due to the exaggerated manner in which he raised his elbows and his upper arms. It is recorded from the Companions of the Prophet that they said: «The Messenger of Allah used to hold his upper arms away from his body.»[45]

So perform your *sujood* well — may Allah have mercy on you, and do not miss anything, for it has been narrated in a hadith: «Verily, the slave prostrates upon seven bodily parts.»[46] Therefore, if any part does not make contact with the ground, it continues to curse him.

It is also incumbent upon him when he makes *rukoo*`, to grip his knees with his hands and space his fingers apart and lean upon his upper arms and his forearms and to keep

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[39] Although in the opinion of Imam Ahmad, this was wrong, Shaykh Nasir ad- Deen al-Albani has explained in his book *The Prophet's Prayer Described,* it is authentically reported from Khuzaymah, ad-Daraqutni and al-Hakim that: "He (the Prophet) used to place his hands on the ground before his knees." Albani further says: "All the hadith which contradict this are not authentic."

[40] Imam Ahmad's position on rising from *sujood* or *tashahud* is likewise contradicted by authentic hadith: "He (ppuh) would get up for the second *rak`ah* supporting himself on the ground." (Bukhari and Shâfi'i) Shaykh al- Albani says: "As for the hadith, 'He used to get up like an arrow, not supporting himself with his hands.' — is fabricated and all narration of similar meaning are weak."

[41] See previous footnote. It would seem that Imam Ahmad came to modify his views later, since, according to Shaykh al-Albani, it is reported by Ibn Haiti in his book *Masa'i al-Imam Ahmad* that: "I saw Abu 'Abdullah (i.e. Imam Ahmad) sometimes supporting himself on his hands while standing up for the next *rak`ah* and sometimes sitting straight and then getting up." It was also the preference of Imam Ishici ibn Rahawayh, who said: "The example was set by the Prophet (ppuh) of supporting himsef when getting up, whether he was old or young." *(The Prophet's Prayer Described* by Shaykh al-Albani)

[42] *Makrooh:* Detested

[43] *Qiblah:* Direction of the Ka`bah in Makkah.

[44] Muslim and Abu Dawood.

[45] Muslim and Abu Dawood.

[46] Bukhari and Abu Dawood.

his back straight (i.e. at a right angle to his legs) and he must not raise his head nor lower it, for it has been narrated from the Prophet that: «... when he made *rukoo`*, if a cup of water had been placed on his back, it would not have moved from its place.[47]»[48]

— This was due to the straightness of his back and the exemplary way in which he performed his *rukoo`*. So perform your Salah well — may Allah have mercy on you — and perfect its *rukoo`* and its *sujood* and (observe) its limits, for it has been narrated in a hadith: «Verily, when the slave performs Salah and performs his Salah well, it is raised up and illuminated, and when it reaches the doors of the heavens, they are opened for it and it intercedes (with Allah) on his behalf, saying, "May Allah preserve you as you did me." But if he performs Salah badly, not perfecting its *rukoo*, or its *sujood*, nor (observing) its limits, it is raised up and it is darkened and it says, "May Allah lose you, as you have lost me." And when it reaches the doors of the heavens, they are closed upon it, then it is rolled up like a bundled garment and it is flung back in the face of its owner.»[49]

It is also incumbent upon a man, when he sits for the *tashahud*, to sit on his left foot, which is spread along the ground with the right foot upright and the toes of the right foot pointing towards the *Qiblah*. His left hand should be placed on his left thigh and the fingers should point towards the *Qiblah*. His right hand should be placed on his right thigh and he should point with his forefinger, while forming his thumb and middle finger into a circle and clenching the remaining fingers. And if he prays towards a *sutrah* (i.e. an object in front of the place of prostration, such as a pillar, a wall or another worshipper etc.), he should perform Salah close to it as this is preferred.[50] He should not allow anyone to pass between him and his *sutrah*, because this is detested. It is narrated from the Prophet (that he said: «Whoever performs Salah towards a *sutrah*, let him stand close to it, for Satan will pass between him and it.»[51]

— It is an act of negligence for the worshipper to allow a person to pass between him and his *sutrah*. He also said: «Repel the one who seeks to pass (between the worshipper and his sutrah), but if he refuses (to give up trying to pass), then strike him for he is a devil.»[52]

And if it were allowed for anyone to pass in front of a person while he is performing Salah, the Prophet would not have ordered the worshipper to strike him. This shows the seriousness of such an act of disobedience as passing in front of a person performing salah and it makes clear that it is also an act of disobedience for the

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[47] Al-Haythami has mentioned in his book *Mujamma az-Zaw 'id* that `Abdullah ibn Ahmad said: "I found it in the book of my father, from 'Ali, and in it (i.e. its *sanad)* is an unnamed man and Sinan ibn Haroon about whom there is some disagreement." However, Shaykh al-Albani mentions in his book *The Prophet's Prayer Described* an authentic narration with a similar wording: "..such that if water were poured on it, it would have stayed there." (Tabrani)

[48] Ahmad

[49] Tabarâni.

[50] Imam Ahmad describes praying close to the *sutrah* as *mustahab* (preferred). However it is narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said: "Do not pray except towards a *sutrah,* and do not let anyone pass in front of you." (Ibn Khuzaymah)

[51] Bukhari, Abu Dawood and Nasa'i.

[52] Abu Dawood.

worshipper to allow him to do so. It is narrated in a hadith that he said: «If any of you knew the sin which is upon him when he passes in front of his brother who is performing Salah, he would wait for forty autumns (i.e. forty years).»[53]

It is also reported that: «... Abu Sa`eed al-Khudri was performing Salah once, and the nephew of Marwan ibn al-Hakam tried to pass in front of him, but Abu Sa`eed prevented him. So he went to his uncle Marwan — who was at that time the Administrator of Madeenah — and complained to him about what Abu Sa`eed had done. Then Abu Sa`eed came to Marwin, who asked him, "Regarding what the son of my brother says, that you struck him what had he done to you to deserve this?" Abu Sa`eed replied, "Allah's Messenger ordered us to prevent anyone passing (in front of a praying person) and if he resists, to prevent him (forcefully) and if he still insists, to strike him for he is a devil; I did no more than strike a devil."»[54]

It is preferred for a man, before he leaves for *Fajr* Salah to pray two *rak'ahs* in his house and then to proceed to the mosque. And it is preferred, for him to mention Allah between the two *rak`ahs* in the house and the *Fajr* Salah, and he should avoid talking except for what is absolutely necessary, such as teaching the ignorant one and correcting him, and ordering him (to do what is incumbent upon the worshipper) and forbidding him (from that which is sinful), for that is an obligation, and performing that which is obligatory is greater and more rewarded than mentioning Allah, which is an optional *Sunnah* (by which one gains extra reward). It has been reported in a hadith that the Prophet said: «No optional act of worship will be accepted until the obligatory has been performed.»[55]

It is preferred for a man, when he goes to the mosque that he should proceed with fear and humility and he should be solemn and quiet. Then (when he reaches the mosque) he should perform Salah with the congregation and if he has missed a part of the Salah, he must make it up at the end. It is reported that: «... the Prophet used to order (the Companions) to proceed slowly to the mosque.»[56]

However, there is no objection to one's hurrying a little if one fears that he will miss the opening *takbeer* of the Salah, so long as that haste is not so excessive as to be hated, because it is narrated from the Companions that, «They used to hurry a little if they feared that they would miss the opening *takbeer*.»[57] You should know — may Allah have mercy upon you — that when the slave (of Allah) leaves his house to go to the mosque, that he is going to face Allah, the Irresistible, the One, the Omnipotent, the Exalted in Might, the Oft-Forgiving, in the knowledge that nothing is hidden from

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[53] This hadith has been narrated by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood and Tirmidhi, without the inclusion of the word 'autumns'. Shaykh al-Albani mentions in his book *The Prophet's Prayer Described* that Abu an-Nadr (a Companion) said: "I do not remember exactly whether he said forty days, months or years."

[54] Bukhari, Muslim, et al.

[55] Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood and Tirmidhi.

[56] Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood.

[57] I have been unable to find this narration and cannot find anything similar. Bukhari narrates that some of the Companions came late for *Salah* and they made some clamour. After the Salah, the Prophet (bpuh) asked them: "What was the matter with you?" They replied, "We were hurrying for the *salah."* He said, "Do not do that. When you come to *Salah*, come in peace and calm and perform *Salah* what you can with the congregation and complete what you have missed." (Bukhari and Muslim) — However, if the haste is so slight as not to cause one to lose one's breath, or disturb the other worshippers, it would appear to be acceptable, and Allah knows best.

Allah, wherever it might be, and that nothing is hidden from Allah and that even something as small as a mustard seed is not concealed from Him, nor even something smaller, nor larger — in the seven earths or the seven heavens, in the seven seas or the lofty mountains, fixed and firm. And verily, the mosque to which he comes is one of the Houses of Allah. He desires only Allah and he sets out to one of Allah's houses, which:

> **(... Allah has permitted to be raised to honour, for the celebration in them of His Name: In them He is glorified in the mornings and the evenings [over and over] by men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the practice of regular charity: Their [only] fear is for the Day when hearts and eyes will be transformed.)** *(Qur'an 24: 36-37)*

So when anyone from amongst you sets out from his house (for the mosque) he should say quietly to himself words of remembrance of Allah — words unconnected with the affairs and business of this world. He should set out calmly, soberly, for this is what the Prophet ordered us to do; he should set out with (his heart full of) longing and desire (for Allah's pleasure) and fear and apprehension (of Allah's anger) and with humility and meekness towards Allah. For the more humble, the more meek, the more submissive he is to Allah, the more virtuous and righteous does he become in Salah and the greater becomes his reward, and the more noble and nearer to Allah becomes the worshipper. But should he be filled with pride, Allah will destroy him and will reject his deeds, for the deeds of the proud are never accepted. It has been narrated in a hadith concerning Prophet Ibraheem, Allah's Khaleel, that he spent the night in worship and remembrance of Allah, and in the morning, he was pleased with his night's worship and he said: "How Good is the Lord of Ibraheem and how good is the slave, Ibraheem." On the following day, finding none to share his food with him — and he loved to share his food — he took his food outside to the road and sat, waiting for any passerby to eat with him. Then two angels descended from the heavens and approached him. So he invited them to eat with him and they accepted. Then Ibraheem suggested that they approach a nearby garden which contained a fresh water spring. They agreed to this and approached the garden, only to find that the spring had run underground, so there was no water. This was a severe blow to Ibraheem, and he was embarrassed by what he had said (because there was no spring in evidence) and so the angels said to him: "Ask your Lord to return the spring." He did so, but the spring did not appear, and this was a great blow to him and so he said to the angels, "You ask Allah." So one of them asked Him and, behold! The water returned, then the other supplicated Allah and the water flowed near to them. Then they informed him that his being impressed by his own standing in prayer the previous night had caused his supplication to be rejected. So beware — may Allah have mercy on you — of pride, for no deed will be accepted if it is accompanied by pride. Be humble in your Salah. Should any of you stand in Salah before his Lord, he should know Allah, in his heart by the great blessings which He bestows upon him and the abundant favour which He grants him, for Allah has honoured him with great goodness, but he has saddled himself with sins. Therefore it is incumbent upon him to be excessive in his humility and meekness towards Allah. It has been narrated in a hadith: «Verily, Allah revealed to Eesa, the son of Maryam. "When you stand before Me, do so in meekness and humility, humbling yourself (before Me), for it is more befitting for your soul to be humble. And when you call upon Me, let your limbs tremble. "» It is also reported that Allah revealed to Prophet Moosa something similar. So what is more befitting

and more correct for you, O' slave of Allah, than that you humble yourself when you stand before Allah?

It is reported concerning Muhammad ibn Seereen, that when he stood in Saia h, the blood would drain from his face, so great was his fear of Allah, and his awe of Him; and it is related from Muslim[58] that: «... when he performed Salah, he was unaware of any voice or any sound, so preoccupied was he with his Salah, and so fearful of Allah, was he."

It is also narrated from `Amir al-`Anbari — who is also known as 'Amir ibn `Abd Qays[59] — that he said: "That a number of daggers be plunged between my shoulders is more preferable to me than to think about worldly matters when I am performing Salah."

And from Seeed ibn Mu'adh, it is narrated that he said: "Never have I prayed a Salah in which I spoke to myself about the affairs of this world, until I left the mosque." And it is reported from Abu ad-Darda' that he said: "My face be covered in dust for my Lord (is most loved by me), — for that is the best kind of worship from Allah." So let none of you fear the dust, nor find it distasteful to make *sujood* in it, for there is no doubt that every one of you comes from it (i.e. mankind was created from dust).[60] Nor should any of you fear an excess of it, for verily, it is by this means that one attempts to attain freedom from slavery and salvation from the Hell-fire — a fire before which the fixed, lofty mountains which were placed as pegs (holding the earth) could not stand, nor the seven strong heavens, built one above another, which are placed as a well guarded canopy over us, nor the earth, which was placed as a dwelling for us, nor the seven seas, of which none knows their depths or their size except the One Who created them. Then what about us, with our feeble bodies, our delicate bones, our flimsy skin? We seek refuge with Allah from the Fire!

So should any of you stand in Salah — may Allah have mercy on you, then let him be as if he sees Allah before him, for though he may not see Allah, verily, Allah sees him. It is narrated in a hadith that Allah's Messenger advised a man, saying: «Fear Allah as though you see Him, for verily, though you may not see Him, He sees you.»[61]

This then, is the advice of the Prophet to the slave in all his affairs, so what about when he performs Salah, when he stands before Allah, in a particular place, a sacred place, desiring Allah and turning his face towards Him? Does not his standing, his situation in Salah merit the same *ihsan* as all his affairs? It says in a hadith: «Verily, the slave, when he starts his Salah, should turn his face to Allah, and he should not turn it away from Him until he leaves or turns to right and left [62].»[63] It is also narrated in a hadith: «Verily, the slave, as long as he is in Salah, possesses three qualities.

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[58] Imam Ahmad is referring here to Muslim ibn Yassar al-Basri al-Umawi al-Kiakki.

[59] Ibn al-Atheer in his book *Usud al-Ghabah* has mentioned him a *Tabi'ee* (one who met some of the Companions and died as a Muslim).

[60] Allah says: (Do you disbelieve in Him Who created you from dust and then out of a sperm drop, then fashioned you into a man) *(Qur'an 18: 37)*

[61] Something similar to this wording is quoted in the hadith in which the Prophet (bpuh) spoke to Jibreel (Gabriel) informing him about the meaning of *Ihsan,* as reported by Bukhari and Muslim.

[62] That is, when he makes *tasleem* at the end of the prayer.

[63] Ahmad, Abu Dawood and Nasa'i.

Blessings are showered upon his head from the heavens above, the angels sit around him, from his feet to the heavens and a caller says, "If the slave knew the One Who hears his whispered utterances, he would never leave his Salah." »[64]

Allah showers His Mercy upon the worshipper who approaches prayer in a state of humility and meekness towards Allah, in fear and supplicating Him with desire (for His Pleasure) and in hope (of His Mercy), making Salah to his Lord, his most important consideration, dedicating his whispered utterances to Him and his standing erect in worship and his *rukoo`* and his *sujood*, poring out his heart and his feelings and struggling to perfect his acts of worship, for he knows not whether he will perform another prayer after it, or he will be overtaken (by death) before he can perform Salah again. He stands before his Lord, earnestly, with deep feelings, hoping for its acceptance and fearing its rejection, for verily, its acceptance is a cause for joy, while its rejection is a cause for misery and wretchedness. Nothing could be more important to you — O' my brother — in this Salah, or indeed in any of your actions (i.e. that Allah should accept them). What is more deserving of your distress and misery, your fear — indeed your terror — you know not whether your Salah will find favour with Allah at all, nor whether any of your good deeds will be accepted. Do you know if your sins will be forgiven at all? After all this, you have no assurance that you will be spared from it (i.e. the punishment of the Hell-fire). So who is more deserving of your tears and sadness (than Allah) — that He may accept from you (your deeds)? In addition to this, you know not whether or not you will awaken in the morning, nor if you will still be here in the evening — will you be given the good news of Paradise, or the bad news of the Hell-fire? I only desire to warn you — O' my brother — of this terrible danger. It is not fitting that you should be happy because of your family, your wealth or your children. It is a most amazing thing that you should continue to be unmindful, chasing after vain desires, wasting your time in disregard of this most important matter, for you are being driven at a fierce pace (towards death) day and night, hour by hour, like the blink of an eye. You should expect — O' my brother — that your time may come at any moment and do not be unmindful of this great danger which may visit you. Most assuredly, you must (eventually) taste death. Your time may come in the morning or in the evening. You will be separated from all that you possessed — either (to be rewarded with) Paradise or (to be punished in) the Hell-fire. Descriptions and stories of them (have become) superfluous. Have you not heard — O' my brother the words of the pious slave: "I am amazed concerning the Hell-fire — how does the one who would flee from it sleep? And I am amazed concerning the Jannah (Garden) — how does the one who desires it sleep? For by Allah! If you neither desire Paradise, nor fear the Hell-fire, then you are destroyed and grievous will be your sorrow, interminable your sadness and without limit your tears; you will be amongst the wretched, the punished ones. So if you claim that you are amongst those who seek refuge from the Fire and desire Paradise, then strive for that which you seek and do not be misled by your worldly desires." Know — may Allah have mercy on you — that Islam is in retreat, knowledge is decreasing, disappearing; it is narrated in a hadith from the Prophet that he said: «Islam began with only a few followers, and it will again be as it was when it began.»[65]

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[64] This narration is mentioned by Muhammad ibn Nasr al-Mirwazi in *Kitab as-Salah — The Book of Prayer* from the hadith of al-Hasan al-Basri in a *mursal* form (an incomplete chain of narrators, in which no Companion is mentioned).

[65] Muslim and Tirmidhi.

It is also reported that he said: «The best of my Ummah[66] are the generation to whom I was sent, then those who come after them, then those who come after them, then those who come after them — and the rest will get worse until the Day of Resurrection...»[67]

It is also narrated that he said to his Companions: «You are better than your sons and your sons are better than their sons and your grandchildren are better than their children and the rest will continue to get worse until the Day of Resurrection.» He also said: «There will come a time when nothing will remain from Islam except the name, nor of the Qur'an except it's writing.[68]

And it is narrated that a man asked: «"How will it be destroyed, when we read the Qur'an and teach it to our children, and they teach it to their children?" He said, "May your mother be bereaved of you![69] Do not the Jews and the Christians teach their children the *Tawrat* and the *lnjeel*?" "Yes, O' Messenger of Allah!" replied the man. The Prophet said, "And what does this benefit them?" The man replied, "Nothing, O' Messenger of Allah! "»[70]

The people are lacking to an alarming degree in religious matters in general, and in performance of their prayers in particular. They can be divided into three categories, two of which do not perform Salah at all; the first includes: the *khawarij*,[71] the *rawafid*,[72] the *mushabbihah'*[73] and the people of *bid`ah* (heresy).[74] They are contemptuous of prayer in congregation and they do not pray them with the Muslims in the mosques and they make *takfeer*[75] of us and accuse us of having left the fold of Islam. The second group are the wastrels, those who run after vain desires, who spend their time in wicked gatherings, drinking alcoholic beverages and doing vile deeds. The third group is the people of the *Jama'ah*,[76] who do not abandon congregational Salah when they hear *Adhan* (the Call). They perform Salah together with the Muslims in their mosques. They are the best of the three groups. These, though they are the best, because of their goodness and virtue — lose (the reward of) their prayers because they anticipate the Imam — except as Allah wills — in their *rukoo* and their *sujood*, in their straightening up and going down, or because they act along with the Imam, when they should follow after him in all of their movements and actions. A person who performed Salah in the Sacred Mosque (in Makkah) during the Hajj season told us: "I saw a large number of people there anticipating the Imam, and they were from all over the world: from *Khurasan* from Africa, from Armenia and many other countries — as Allah willed." And we have seen this for ourselves. You see the

[66] Ummah: Community, nation.
[67] A similar hadith has been narrated by Bukhari and Muslim.
[68] Bayhaqi.
[69] This was an old expression of the Arabs, not to be taken literally.
[70] Ahmed, Ibn Majah, Tirmidhi and ad-Darimi.
[71] *Khawarij:* Seceders; Seceding the camp of 'Ali in the battle of Siffin. A deviant sect, considering anybody committing a sin a *kafir*. They sought to impose their extreme views by force.
[72] *Rawafid:* The *Shi'ites.*
[73] *Mushabbihah':* Those who compared Allah's Divine Attributes with those of His created beings.
[74] People of *Bid`ah:* Those who introduce innovations in the religion of Allah, which were unknown to the Prophet (pbuh) and the Companions.
[75] *Takfeer:* To denounce others as an unbeliever.
[76] The people of the *Jama'ah:* The company of Muslims who follow the path of the Prophet (bpuh) and the Companions.

Khurâsâni, coming all the way from *Khurâsân* to perform Hajj yet anticipating the Imam when he performs Salah with him. Likewise you see the *Shâmi*, the African, the *Hijâzi* and the others doing the same. Stranger than this is to see people competing in virtue, coming early to Friday Salah. Perhaps some of them prayed Fajr Salah in a congregational mosque, desiring to attain virtue, praying: bending, prostrating, standing, sitting, reciting the *Qur'an*, supplicating Allah, in hope and in fear — and they remain so until *Asr* prayer, after which they supplicate until *Maghrib* prayer. But in spite of all this, they anticipate the Imam; and this is a trick of Satan. He overcomes them and cheats them of the reward of their obligatory prayers. They bow and they prostrate along with him (the Imam) and straighten up and go down with him, due to ignorance and the deception of Satan. They try to attain nearness to Allah by their non-obligatory prayers, then they lose the reward of the obligatory prayers. It has been narrated in a hadith: «Allah will not accept a non-obligatory act of worship until the obligatory has been performed.»

Only the one who does not lose the fundamental thing (Friday Salah) may expect to receive the reward of attending early. One might dispense with the extra reward and suffice oneself with the reward for the obligatory action, but not the reverse. Whoever loses the reward of the fundamental thing loses the extra reward also, but whoever loses the extra reward but attains the reward of the fundamental, this will be sufficient for him. When you lose the obligatory, while striving for the optional, you are like the merchant who looks only at his profits without deducting his capital expenditure and so he spends all of the `profit' and is left with neither profit nor capital. May Allah shower His Mercy upon the one who sees his brother anticipating the Imam in rukoo and sujood, or performing Salah badly by himself and advises him• ordering him (to do the obligatory) and forbidding him (from doing the unlawful) and does not remain silent, for advising is an obligation, while remaining silent is a punishable sin. Verily, Satan wishes you to refrain from speech about those things which Allah has ordained for you and to abandon the mutual cooperation in goodness and piety and mutual advising which He has enjoined upon you. Satan desires that you be amongst the humiliated sinners, not that you are amongst those rewarded. And he desires the religion to disappear and that you do not preserve a single Sunnah, nor extinguish a single bid'ah. So obey Allah in those things which He has enjoined upon you, such as mutual advice and mutual cooperation in enjoining goodness and piety. And do not obey Satan, for verily he is an enemy to you, who will clearly misguide you; Allah has informed you of this in His words:

> **(Verily, Satan is an enemy to you: so treat him as an enemy...)** *(Qur'an 35: 6)* And:
>
> **(O' sons of Adam! Do not let Satan seduce you in the same manner as he got your parents [Adam and Eve] out of the garden...)** *(Qur'an 7: 27)*

You should know that this deficiency in salah from those Muslims to whom goodness is attributed and those who go early to prayer — from the east to the west — is due to the silence of the people of knowledge and *fiqh* concerning them (and their mistakes), and their abandoning the advice, teaching, correct manners, ordering (the good) and forbidding (the evil) which are incumbent upon them, in addition to refuting (errors) and changing (that which is wrong). Due to this, the ignorant continue to anticipate the Imam and there are many with them who claim to be people of knowledge and

fiqh, vision and goodness, yet they do not perform Salah perfectly. It really is the most amazing thing to see the people of knowledge following the ignorant and acting like them, anticipating the Imam. It is a binding obligation upon scholars and the *fuqaha'*[77] to teach the ignorant and advise them and take them by the hand: their failure to do so is a punishable sin and an act of disobedience and a betrayal of trust. They are in many ways similar to the cheat, the talebearer and those who are contemptuous of the poor and the weak and the other sinners too numerous to mention. It is narrated from the Prophet that he said: «Whosoever sees something detestable should try to change it by his hand: if he is unable to, he should speak against it: if he is unable to, he should hate it with his heart and this is the least part of faith.»[78]

The one who loses his Salah, whether by competing with the Imam or by not completing his *rukoo* or *sujood* if he prays alone, commits a detestable act, for he is a thief: The Prophet said: «The worst thief is the one who steals from his Salah." They said, "O' Messenger of Allah! How does he steal from his Salah?" He replied, "He does not complete his *rukoo* or his *sujood*."»[79]

The one who steals from his Salah must be censured by whoever sees him and he must advise him. What if a thief were to steal a *dirham* (coin), would whoever saw him not be obligated to censure him? The one who steals from his Salah is a greater thief than the one who steals a *dirham*. It is narrated from Ibn Mas`ood that he said: "Whoever sees a person performing Salah badly and does not forbid him shares with him in his sin and his discredit."

It is reported from Bilal ibn S'ad that he said: "The sin which is hidden harms only the perpetrator, but if it is done in public and not stopped, it will harm the whole community.[80] It harms the whole community because they have neglected what is incumbent upon them, which is censure and changing of openly committed sins. So if a person prays badly where no one sees him, thus losing the reward of his Salah due to not perfecting his *rukoo* or his *sujood*, the sin is only upon him. But if he does it where people can see him and no one censures him nor stops him, the sin is upon all of them. So fear Allah O' slaves of Allah in all of your affairs, particularly your Salah. Perfect them and advise your brothers (in their correct performance). It is the last thing in your religion, so hold on to it. Also, your Lord has mentioned it amongst the acts of obedience which He has made incumbent upon you, so fulfill the commission with which your Prophet has especially charged you. It has been reported in a hadith from the Prophet that: «... the last advice and the last commission with which he entrusted his community before departing this world was, "That you fear Allah in your prayers and concerning that which your right hand possesses (i.e. your slaves)." »[81]

Salah will be the last thing to be lost in Islam; after it has gone nothing will remain of the religion. It is the first of his deeds about which the slave will be asked on the Day

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[77] *Fuqaha':* Sing: *faqeeh;* Scholars of Islamic jurisprudence.
[78] Bukhari and Muslim.
[79] by Ahmed, Malik and ad-Darimi.
[80] This is a saying of Bilal ibn S'ad, a *Tabi`i.* Also Imam Ahmad narrates in his *Musnad* that the Prophet (pbuh) said: ."..from him if sins are made public amongst the people of my Ummah, Allah will punish them all with a punishment."
[81] Ahmad, Nasa'i, lbn Majah and lbn Hibban.

of Resurrection and it is a central pillar of Islam and if the pillar falls, the whole pavilion will fall. The pegs and the ropes will not suffice. If the Salah is lost, the Islam is lost. Allah has made special mention of it amongst the various acts of obedience and has described those who perform it (well) as virtuous. He ordered us to ask Him through it, and to patiently perform all acts of obedience and abstain from all acts of disobedience. So order those who are reluctant and admonish them — may Allah have mercy on you — to perform the Salah in the mosques and prevent them (from disobedience) by your hands — if you cannot, then speak out — and be aware that it is not permissible for you to be silent concerning them, because absence from Salah is a major sin. It is reported that the Messenger of Allah said: «I intended to order the Salah, and when the *iqamah* was called, to go to the houses of those who were absent from the congregation and burn their houses over them.»[82]

The Prophet threatened them with the burning of their houses and it is clear that if absence from the prayer were not a major sin, he would not have done so. It is also narrated in a hadith: «There is no Salah for the neighbour of the mosque except in the mosque.[83]»[84]

The 'neighbour of the mosque' includes whoever lives up to a distance of forty houses away from it. The Prophet said: «Whoever hears the *Mu'adh-dhin*[85] and does not respond, there is no Salah for him except the one who is excused (due to incapacity).»[86]

And it is reported that when 'Umar ibn al-Khattâb was the *Khaleefah*, he noticed that a certain person was missing from the congregational prayers so he went to his house to inquire why he was absent. He called out to the man, who came out, and 'Umar said to him: "What prevented you from attending the Salah?" He replied, "Illness, O' Commander of the Believers! If I had not heard your voice, I would not have ventured out," — or he said, "...I could not have ventured out." 'Umar said, "You have neglected the call of one who has more right to be answered than I: Allah's caller to Salah." It is also narrated from 'Umar that he noticed the absence of some people from the Salah and he said: "What is wrong with people who are absent from the Salah, causing others to follow their example? Either they attend the mosque or I will send someone to strike them upon their necks." Then he said, "Attend the Salah Attend the Salah!"

It is also narrated from 'Abdullâh ibn Umm Maktoom that he said: "O' Messenger of Allah! I am an old man, with feeble sight and a frail body and my home is very remote. Between me and the mosque there are palm trees and a ravine — is there a

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[82] Bukhari and Muslim.
[83] Shaykh al-Islam ibn Taymiyah has mentioned in his book *al-Qawa'id an-Nooraniya al-Fiqhiyyah — The Enlightened Rules of Fiqh* that this narration is not attributable to the Prophet (pbuh) with an authentic *sanad,* but that it is a saying of 'Ali (may Allah be pleased with him). At all accounts, there is no doubt that its meaning is authentic.
[84] ad-Daraqutni and al-Hakim.
[85] *Mu 'adh-dhin:* The caller to prayer.
[86] Al-Mundhiri says: "We have reported this from more than one of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah that they said, 'Whoever heard the call to *Salah* and did not answer it, without an excuse, there is no prayer for him.' — this has also been narrated from the Prophet (pbuh)."

license for me to perform Salah (pray) at home?" The Prophet asked, "Do you hear the call?" He replied, "Yes." The Prophet said, "Then answer it."[87]

The Messenger of Allah did not permit a frail, old, blind man who lived far from the mosque and whose path was filled with obstacles, such as a ravine and palm trees to be absent from the (congregational) Salah. If it were permissible for anyone to absent himself from Salah, the Prophet would have permitted this frail, old, blind man to do it. So you must rebuke those who do not attend Salah in the mosque, for they commit a great sin in so doing. And you are their partners in this great sin if you do not advise them and rebuke them when you are able to do so. It is narrated by Abu ad-Darda', from Ibn Mas`ood, that he said: "Verily, Allah has legislated for every Prophet a Sunnah. And He has legislated for your Prophet; part of that Sunnah is to pray five times a day in congregation. Now I have come to know that each one of you has a 'mosque' in his house. Should you pray there, you will be abandoning the Sunnah of your Prophet, and if you abandon the Sunnah of your Prophet you will have gone astray." So fear Allah, and order the absentees to Salah in congregation. If you do not do so you will be guilty of sin and will share in their sin also and you will not be saved (from the Fire). This is due to your abandoning the obligation to advise and admonish and to forbid (sin) with your hands, if you are able and your tongues, if you are not. It is illustrated in a hadith: «A man will come forward on the Day of Resurrection holding onto his neighbour, and he will say, "O' my Lord! This man deceived me." The other will respond, "O' my Lord! By Your Power! I did not deceive him, neither in his family nor in his property." The first will reply, "He has spoken the truth, O' my Lord! But he used to see me committing sins and he did not forbid me from doing so." »[88]

The one who is absent from the congregational Salah commits a great sin, so beware of his taking hold of you on the morrow (i.e. on the Day of Judgement) and disputing with you before the Most Forceful. And do not delay advising him today, even though he may insult you or hurt you or show enmity to you, for verily, it is better for you that he should be your enemy today than that he should hold onto you tomorrow (on Judgement Day) and dispute with you before the Most Forceful and reject your excuses in that awesome place. Bear his insults today for Allah's sake and for His pleasure, that you may be amongst the Prophets and their followers in faith tomorrow. If you see a person performing salah (praying) a nafl (non-obligatory) Salah, and he does not straighten his back between *rukoo`* and *sujood*, it is obligatory for you to order him [to perform salah (pray) properly] and to forbid him [from performing Salah (praying) incorrectly] and to advise him how to perform Salah (prayer). If you do not, you will be partners with him in his sin and you will all lose the reward of your Salah.

You should know that amongst the mistakes committed by the ignorant is that they pray *nafl* salah , and they do not perform the *rukoo`* or the *sujood* properly nor keep their backs straight, and they think that it does not matter because they are only praying a *nafl* salah and that they will be rewarded for it. But that is not the case, because whoever prays a *nafl* salah, it is obligatory for him to perform salah (prayer) perfectly, just as it is obligatory for a person who put on garments of Hajj (Ihram

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[87] Bukhari and Muslim.
[88] Al-Mundhiri.

cloth) to perform Hajj perfectly, even though it may be a voluntary act. And whoever went hunting during his Hajj would have to make expiation for it. Likewise, if a man were to fast a voluntary fast and then break it in the afternoon, he would be obliged to make up for that day.[89] Likewise, a man who gives a *dirham* (coin) in charity to a poor person and then takes it back is obliged to return it to him. Every voluntary act contains obligatory acts which must be performed completely, perfectly; and the worshipper makes them incumbent upon himself as soon as he begins the act of worship, whereas if he had not begun that act there would be nothing incumbent upon him. So if you see anyone praying an obligatory or voluntary Salah, advice him to perform .Salah (prayer) correctly and completely — if you do not, you will be guilty of sin. May Allah preserve you and us.

Some ignorant people say: "There is no obligation or sin upon the one who anticipates the Imam due to forgetfulness." As a proof, they quote the hadith, which says: «There is no obligation upon those behind the Imam to perform *Sujood as-Sahu* (the sujood of forgetfulness).» It is true that this is narrated, but they are mistaken in understanding it's meaning. It's meaning is: Whoever stands when he should sit, or sits when he should stand, or forgets whether he has performed Salah (prayed) three or four *rak`ahs*, or forgets to make *takbeer* — he is not obliged to make *Sujood as-Sahu*. This does not apply to one who anticipates the Imam. Nothing has come to us from the Prophet or the Companions in this regard, whether the worshipper anticipates the Imam forgetfully or intentionally. The Prophet said: «Does not the one who raises his head before the Imam fear that Allah will turn his head into that of a donkey?» — He did not say: "...unless he does it forgetfully." Nor did he order him to make *Sujood as-Sahu*. Ibn Mas`ood said: "You have neither prayed alone nor followed your Imam." He did not say: "...unless you did it forgetfully." Nor did he order him to make *Sujood as-Sahu*. And Ibn 'Abbas also said: "You have neither prayed alone nor with the Imam," — he did not say: "...unless you forgot." Nor did he order him to make *Sujood as-Sahu* — instead he struck him and ordered him to repeat the Salah. And Salman said: "Whoever raises his head and bows before the Imam, his forelock is in Satan's hand." He did not say, "...unless he does it forgetfully. Nor did he order him to make *Sujood as-Sahu*."

Sometimes the Prophet and 'Umar and other Companions would forget. Some of them would forget to recite in the first two *rak`ah*, reciting instead in the last two. Some would sit when they should stand or stand when they should sit and in all these cases, they would make *Sujood as-Sahu*. This has been reported in many *hadiths* from the Prophet and his Companions, and this is the *Sunnah*. As for the one who precedes the Imam, it has been narrated that there is no Salah for him whether due to forgetfulness or not. *Sujood as-Sahu* does not compensate for it. How could it, when he sees the Imam lowering himself and prostrates quickly, going into *sujood* before him? How could it when he sees the Imam still in *sujood*, but lifts his head before him? How could it be he prostrates when he sees the Imam is about to do so (while the Imam is still sitting)? Or the Imam finishes reciting, so he bows before the Imam has made

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[89] In fact, it is clear that a voluntary fast does not have to be repeated; it is reported from the Prophet (bpuh) that he said: "The one who is fasting voluntarily is in charge of himself. If you wish you may fast and if you wish you may break your fast." (Ahmed, ad-Daraqutni, al-Bayhaqi and al-Hakim). He (pbuh) also said (addressing a person fasting voluntarily): "Break your fast and fast another day in it's place — if you wish." (Bayhaqi — lbn Hajar said it is a sound hadith) — this shows the preferability of making up for the *nafl fast* as opposed to it's obligation.

takbeer? It is incumbent upon him in all these cases to wait for the Imam to act before following him. There is no place *for Sujood as-Sahu* in these instances. It was no compensation for the Prophet and his Companions, neither did they order it. Instead they ordered that the prayer must be repeated and the Prophet made us fear (Allah's punishment) saying that: «...Allah will turn his head into that of a donkey.» And this is because he does not complete his Salah and is careless in it, and he minimizes the importance of it in his heart. Let the ignorant man beware of believing that he excuses himself with *Sujood as-Sahu* that which cannot be excused, thereby carrying the burden of his sins and those whom he leads astray by his false example — an example which none of the pious would follow. So be careful in your prayers — O' slaves of Allah! — for it is the last thing in your religion. Let the one who believes that he has prayed when he has not beware, for it is reported in a *hadith*: «"... that a man will pray for sixty years and yet he has no Salah." It was asked, "How can that be?" He said, "He completes his *rukoo`* but does not complete his *sujood*, or he completes his *sujood* but not his *rukoo`*."»

It is narrated from Hudhayfah) that he saw a man praying who did not complete his *rukoo* or his *sujood* and he said to him: "For how long have you been praying in this manner?" He replied, "For forty years." Hudhayfah said, "You have not prayed, and should you die in this state you will have died upon the fitrah."[90] It is also narrated from lbn Mas`ood that he was talking to some of the Companions, when suddenly he broke off his speech." They asked him, "What made you stop talking!, Abu `Abdur-Rahmân?" He said, "I see a most amazing thing! I see two men: As for the first, Allah will not look at him and as for the second, Allah will not accept his Salah." They asked, "Who are they?" He replied, "As for the one whom Allah will not look at, he is the man who walks with pride. As for the one whose Salah Allah will not accept, he is that man who is praying without completing his *rukoo`* or his *sujood*."

It is also reported in a hadith that: «... a man entered the mosque and performed Salah (prayed), then sat by the Prophet who asked him, "Have you performed Salah (prayed), O' So- and-so?" He replied, "Yes, O' Messenger of Allah!" He said, "Stand up and repeat it." The man did so, then sat by the Prophet again. He asked him, "Have you performed Salah (prayed) O' so- and-so?" He said, "Yes, O' Messenger of Allah!" He answered, "You have not prayed, stand up and repeat it again." He did so again (and again)..., after three or four times, the Prophet taught him to pray properly, after which he prayed in the manner taught to him by the Prophet.[91]»[92]

May Allah have mercy on a man who gains the reward and recompense by spreading this treatise to all corners of the earth, for the people of Islam are in great need of it, due to their general slackness in performing their prayers — and Allah knows best the truth.

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[90] *Fitrah:* The natural state in which one is born, i.e. as a Muslim. Bukhari mentioned this hadith, but he did not mention the words: "for forty years." But it is related by Nasa'i and ath-Thawri as Imam Ahmad has narrated it. It must be pointed out, however, that Hudhayfah died in the year 36 A.H., which would mean that the man began performing *Salah* (praying) four years before the Hijrah, though it is possible that the man meant: "For a long time." This is a common manner of speech amongst the Arabs, and Allah knows best.
[91] This is the well known hadith of the man who performed *Salah* (prayed) badly, reported by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i and Ibn Majah.
[92] Bukhari and Muslim.